



San Diego City Attorney **CASEY GWINN**

NEWS RELEASE

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CHROME PLATING SHOP OWNER IS CHARGED WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES, JUSTICE SOUGHT FOR GRANT HILL COMMUNITY

Ninety-Six Counts Filed By San Diego City Attorney's Office

San Diego, CA: A ten-month investigation culminating in a search warrant provided City prosecutors with key evidence to charge the owner of a chrome plating shop with numerous environmental crimes. Manuel Tellez Ramos and George Moises Ramos, owners and operators of California Plating, were arraigned today in Superior Court and charged with ninety-six violations of federal, state and local environmental laws. The charges included illegal dumping of industrial wastes into the city sewer system, illegal hazardous waste management, and numerous building, fire and zoning code violations. California Plating is an industrial facility located at 2802 Imperial Avenue, in a mixed commercial/residential area.

City Attorney Casey Gwinn said "This case is about environmental protection. We are aggressively pursuing those businesses that ignore environmental regulations and that pose a potential threat to the community."

According to Deputy City Attorney Kathryn Lange, the Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit in the City Attorney's Office coordinated the investigation that involved nearly 50 law enforcement investigators and regulatory inspectors from eight agencies, including the San Diego County Department of Environmental Health's Hazardous Materials Division, the Metropolitan Wastewater Department's Industrial Wastewater Control Program, the Fire-Rescue Department's Fire Prevention Bureau, the Neighborhood Code Compliance Department's Enforcement Divisions, and the San Diego Police Department. The investigation included the use of automatic samplers placed secretly in the sewer lines, remote-controlled robotic cameras to inspect the City sewer, and laboratory analysis of alleged industrial waste discharges into the shop's plumbing and alleged hazardous wastes stored on the property. In February, the City Attorney's Environmental Protection Unit used information from regulatory inspections and the stealthy monitoring of the sewage system to obtain a search warrant to look for additional evidence of the violations. City Attorney Casey Gwinn noted that "This case is another example of the dedication and hard work by the Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit that has resulted in a long line of successful environmental prosecutions."

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“This case is also about striving towards livable communities,” said Councilman Ralph Inzunza. “Residents who live in my district are constantly affected by the mismanagement of industrial waste at businesses near their homes. As long as businessowners continue to ignore the law, the government will continue to prosecute them and try to shut them down.”

The plating shop produces large amounts of waste that is highly corrosive and contains toxic metals such as chromium and lead. These wastes were allegedly discharged into the sewer system without a permit and without the required pre-treatment, which could result in damage to the sewer system or personal injury to sewer workers. Some hazardous wastes were not properly managed such that contamination of the leased property allegedly occurred.

Several residents who live near the chrome plating shop attended today’s arraignment, along with representatives from the Environmental Health Coalition (EHC), a local environmental justice organization that works to protect public health and the environment threatened by toxic pollution. EHC’s Toxic Free Neighborhoods Campaign has worked since 1980 to relocate polluting industries out of residential communities to appropriate industrial zones. Diane Takvorian, EHC’s executive director, said “I am very pleased to see that the San Diego City Attorney recognizes the public health threat presented by these plating shops and is acting to put an end to the pollution.”

The Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit provides assistance with complaints regarding environmental crimes through its Helpline at (619) 533-5600. For more information about the Unit, visit www.sandiegocityattorney.org and click “Consumer Corner.”

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